

# ECHOES ALONG THE WASHOUGAL<sup>1</sup>

## SOME THOUGHTS ON CULTURE AND ELEMENTARY EDUCATION AT LAKE WOE-BE-LACK[AMAS]<sup>2</sup>

As the 50th Anniversary of my high school graduation approaches (4 June 1992), my thoughts, on occasion, turn to a memory exercise -- a test to see if I can remember (hopefully with some semblance of objectivity) those elementary, junior high and senior high teachers with a positive and lasting impact on my life and career. Some readers may wonder: "Why bother?" The answer is partially written in the classical words of Tagore: <sup>3</sup> "It is the finding of ourselves outside ourselves that makes us glad." It is not "There, but for the grace of God, go I", but rather "There I go -- all of me that will ever go anywhere." The young seldom face reality; with age we ultimately face up to inner reality -- often surprised by the dark places within our nature. We become aware that only an accident of culture separates us from the New Guinea hunter who skins an animal without bothering to kill it first; an accident of time we are not personally burning a witch at colonial Salem. Even the gentle and humane culture which supplied our marvelous 1930s/1940s-type teachers would one day bid all of us to kill in the four (+) wars which so far have spanned our adult lives; kill in the name of whatever happened to be politically holy at the moment. I make no apology for wartime actions; my culture leaves me entirely comfortable with the old adage: *"My country first, right or wrong"* (so whatever is politically "holy" for my government is politically correct for me). All but the infantile adult will, on retrospect, remember when he (or she) views the real world that life has been punctuated with older people who have nourished us, stretched out a hand when it was needed and probably channeled us toward whatever success we will ever have. Later teachers in college had their impacts, but I find I have trouble even remembering their names; the names of the teachers up through high school come naturally to memory--permanently and indelibly etched in the mind.

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1 Washougal (and Little Washougal) literally translate as "Laughing Waters" by some native Americans. The Washougal is fed partially by Lackamas Creek, which name was derived from early French Settlers calling the village of (Camas) LaCamas after the Kamass Lily (Figure 1), a kind of wild hyacinth with a bulbous root favored as foodstock by local native Americans. The Washougal was called The Seal River by The Lewis And Clark Expedition (one supposes Sea Otters followed the spawning salmon inland this far) as that expedition probed The Columbia River and its tributaries.

2 With apologies to Garrison Keillor, author of Lake Wobegone.

3 TAGORE, Sir Rabindranath (1861 - 1941), Native of Bengali, India; winner of 1913 Nobel Prize for Literature.